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CHRISTIAN UNION

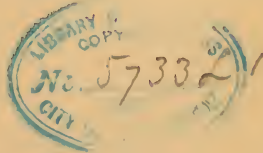
NECESSARY FOR

RELIGIOUS PROGRESS AND DEFENSE.

BY JOHN F. HURST, D.D.

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ADDRESS BEFORE THE EVANGELICAL ALLIANCE, IN BASLE, SWITZERLAND,
SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 6, 1879.

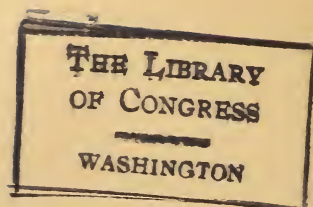


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CONTENTS.

I. THE IDEAL CHURCH.

1. ORIGIN.
2. DOCTRINE.
3. THE EXAMPLE.
4. THE EXPERIENCE.

II. UNITY NOT TO BE MISTAKEN FOR UNIFORMITY —UNIFORMITY NOT DESIRABLE.

III. FAILURE OF ENFORCED UNIFORMITY.

IV. THE AMERICAN EXAMPLE.

V. NO AMERICAN SURRENDER OF INDIVIDUALITY.

VI. GROWTH OF CHRISTIAN UNION IN THE MOST RECENT TIMES.

1. THE PREVAILING THEOLOGY.
2. MEASURES TOWARD
UNION OF ORGANIZATION.
3. DANGER OF PREMA-
TURE UNION.
4. THE LESSON OF THE EVANGELICAL
ALLIANCE.
5. SUNDAY-SCHOOL INSTRUCTION.
6. BIBLE
REVISION.
7. YOUNG MEN'S CHRISTIAN ASSOCIA-
TIONS.

VII. NECESSITY OF UNION IN OPPOSING ERROR.

1. HEATHENISM.
2. ROMANISM.
3. SKEPTICISM.
4. UNION OF SOCIETY.

VIII. THE ADVANCE YET TO BE MADE.

1. PREACHING OF FUNDAMENTAL DOCTRINES.
2. DE-
NOMINATIONAL INTERCHANGE.
3. LOVE OF COMMON
POSSESSIONS.

IX. UNITY IN THE CHURCH MILITANT A PREPA- RATION FOR THE HIGHER UNITY OF THE CHURCH TRIUMPHANT.

NOTE.

The following Address was largely prepared away from my library, during a brief summering at Schwalbach, Germany. It was subjected to the conditions of the main public sessions of the Evangelical Alliance, and needed, therefore, to be delivered in the German language, with much matter, originally designed for delivery, omitted. The whole Address has in this new shape undergone careful revision; important parts have been added to the text, and such full foot-notes and references have been given as one has facility and the heart to do when he is within arm's length of his own books. The accounts of the Young Men's Christian Associations and of the Free Religion Conference have been given here in much fuller form than when originally prepared for use at Basle.

DREW THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY, }
MADISON, N. J., Jan. 1, 1880. }

J. F. H.

CHRISTIAN UNION NECESSARY FOR RELIGIOUS PROGRESS.

I.

THE IDEAL CHRISTIAN CHURCH.

ALL history abounds in positive and sharp antagonisms. Her favorite colors are contrasts; her masterpieces are parts and counterparts. In her long gallery she seems to take a special pride in rearing beauty close beside deformity—Paul not far from Nero, Luther at Tetzels elbow, Coligny within sight of Catharine de Medici, Knox near the Scotch Mary, and Wesley in near neighborhood to Bolingbroke and Hume. It is thus that He who rules the years, and is Lord of the harvest, provides good hands to uproot the evil tares, and to those who come after he proves his ardent love for their better wisdom and surer steps; for, such are our dullness of perception and dimness of vision, that we learn by glare of color what we never could hope to acquire by hues of milder quality. The Church is no exception to this law of formation and transformation. Its origin is in heaven, but its march is along the dusty pathways of earth. It abounds in extremes, but it also combines them with amazing skill. It is affected by its human surroundings, and is strong or weak in faith, aggressive or prostrate, heroic or timid, according to the spirit of those constituting its membership. The Church is not some rigid and metallic thing, whose history is a mere Hegelian necessity, over whose future its members have no conditioning or determining power. It has its enduring foundations, its precious truths, its prophecy of final triumph over sin; but it is constantly under-

going such changes as new generations bring with them. The human does affect the divine.

An important question, then, to settle is: To what part of this career of the Church must we look as its purest and best? In other words, When, if ever, was there an ideal Christian Church? We answer: The first period of Christianity presents us with the best view of the Church of Christ, and all subsequent history is simply a succession of approaches and departures from that pure beginning. It was Christ's kingdom in microcosm. The Church was of small membership, of no material wealth, with no helpful literature or favoring legislation on the part of the Roman Empire, and with its patience yet untested; but it was still pure, and had heard from the Master the command of universal conquest. It had made no mistakes. It was radiant with the recent presence of the Messiah, and was extending through the labors of his surviving disciples and companions.

Christ had two fundamental thoughts in regard to the future of his body of believers: First, that they should be pure; and second, that they should be united. Only from purity as a root could there be hope of the vigorous growth of unity. If we would know what is the uppermost thought in a great mind we must listen to the last words. When the sharp outlines of this human life are getting dim, and the curtain hiding the future is about to be drawn aside, the lips are wont to express the whole mind. The father speaks with a new tenderness and disclosure to his children. In these last interviews the love and tenderness of a lifetime are compacted. This beautiful humanness we find in Christ himself. The hour had come, at last, when he could make full revelation of his love. "Henceforth," he said, "I call you not servants, but friends." The days of servitude and concealment were past; the time of friendship and intense communion had come.

Christ never had any fears for the progress and perpetuity of his Church. He knew that it was the small mustard-seed

which should produce the broad, sheltering tree. It was the leaven which should leaven the whole mass of the human race. But the one thing which seemed to give him most concern was the possible divisions that might arise while on the way to this final triumph. This apprehension cast a shadow over his last utterances to his disciples ; nay, over his last prayers to the Father. "This is my commandment," he said, as if all commandments were comprised in this, "that ye love one another." Then this love must be of divine quality : "as I have loved you." Who will measure the depth of Christ's love for his children ? It was his love which led him to assume the form of our frail humanity, to pass through the sorrows of an earthly pilgrimage, and to undergo the shame and hostility of Jew, and Greek, and Roman. No language can express the force of this great love. Even inspiration does not attempt its measurement. Yet this is the boundless and indescribable love placed before us as the measure and example of the love which all believers are enjoined to exercise toward each other.

But as Christ prays that those who have seen him, and have been taught by him, may be united by the great bond of love for him, he looks into the far future. He knows that the trials before his children are to be many and severe. He foresees that their unity is to pass through the severest ordeals, and hence he says : "Neither pray I for these alone ; but for them also which shall believe on me through their word ; that they all may be one ; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us ; that the world may believe that thou hast sent me."

In harmony with these final declarations of the Master are the positive statements of those apostles and writers who caught most fully the spirit of his life. Paul said : "Now I beseech you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you ; but that ye be perfectly joined together in the

same mind, and in the same judgment." John, the adoring and the loving, who carried into his latest years the precious memories of Him on whose breast he had leaned, preached, latest of all, the evangel of love: "Little children, love one another." This aspiration for unity entered into the whole structure of the primitive Church: "The multitude of them that believed were of one heart and of one soul." This was the firm attitude of the primitive Church, and all the teachers of the initial age of Christianity enforced the lesson of the broadest brotherhood.

It would seem that it was a part of the divine plan, that the believers of all ages should learn their oneness in Christ from the very nature of their new life and of the divine organization into which they had entered.

1. ORIGIN.

Christianity stands alone among religions in the complete unity of its conception and doctrinal basis. All the other ethnic religions are mosaics. Not one has coherency. They have been brought together from various quarters, are the outgrowth of various minds, and of the juxtaposition of numberless superstitions. It is difficult to tell, in some of them, which element predominates, from what country the prevailing idea has come. Even Mohammedanism, which is at least some advance on the idolatry of the farther East, and has always made its boast of unity, is a hopeless mixture of Arabian legend, Talmudic fable, Persian fatalism, and the gross materialism of the remoter and wilder Orient. The same incongruity is found in all the other leading false religions. But Christianity stands out before mankind as the one faith which challenges the love of the world by virtue of its individuality and the perfect harmony of its proportions.

Far back in the infancy of man, when God made his first revelation to our erring humanity, he ordained a redeeming day and a universal Saviour. Around the one promise of a Redeemer

were grouped all the types and shadows, the prophecies, traditions, form of government, choice of a home, and the hopes of the people. When the Redeemer came, in God's chosen hour and place, it was the fulfillment of centuries of prophecy and preparation. He gathered his few disciples about him, gave them the impress of his love and the treasure of his truth, and died by violent hands. His work survived his bodily presence, for good deeds have none of the taint of mortality. His cause had such a singular power over those who espoused it that they cheerfully died for it. So soon as Christianity proved itself a dangerous foe to the pagan faith, the latter proposed a compromise—that there should be an amalgamation of the leading elements of both Christianity and paganism. Christianity declined the proposition. Its mission could endure no admixture. So, Roman paganism, the mosaic of all previous ages and all lands that had entered the region of universal history, now for the first time came in contact with a faith which would not submit to absorption or assimilation. Christianity, with its acute consciousness of its own complete unity, never listened for a moment to the proposition for a duality of life. It was eager to undertake its mission without the ægis of any other faith. Hence it said to Gnosticism what Christ once said to the author of it, "Get thee behind me, Satan."

2. DOCTRINE.

The unity of the Church is likewise clearly taught in its doctrinal structure. Whether the sacred writers were acquainted with each other or not, whether they belonged to the same century, or spoke the same language, or were citizens of the same country, were small questions, that had no bearing on the one great fact of the harmony of their doctrine. The sacred writers from Moses to John taught the same truth. Truth is many-sided, and all sides need to be emphasized. One writer may declare the great necessity of faith, another that of works, but all agree on the necessity of faith and works.

The harmony and progress of the Scriptures are sublime. The afflatus of inspiration in revealing the Bible gave it a brotherhood never yet disturbed by hostile criticism. There was complete unanimity in the early Church as to what were the canonical books of Scripture, and one of the first thoughts of the Christians was to combine them. God taught this canonicity definitely. First the truth, and then the identification of it—these were two separate and positive divine lessons. The oneness of scriptural doctrine, without admixture from Persia, Athens, or Rome, gave the Church its marvelous oneness of faith and power. The Christian in exile and the martyr at home had one common rule of life. They minded the same doctrine. By and by there arose serious divergencies of view concerning fundamental truths, such as the procession of the Holy Spirit, and the relation of sin and grace. But all who were of devout life and sincere purpose professed firm faith in the Scriptures, and in due time the real departure from the written word was seen and decided, and those who had conducted it either returned to the Scripture standard, or passed out of the pale of the Church and disappeared in hopeless oblivion. But there was always a general progress. Each age had its own problems to solve. The second century settled the question of the monarchism of God; the third established the true distinction of the persons in the Godhead; while the fourth settled finally the doctrine of consubstantiality in God. These were all necessary stages on the highway to truth; and, as a proof of the unity of the apologetic period, stands the fact, that the literature of that age is still the greatest store-house for Christian defense. With all our modern accession to evidences, the fundamental arguments lie back in the writings of the apologetic fathers of the first four centuries of the Christian era.

3. THE EXAMPLE.

However pure the pre-Christian lessons to men for holy living, there was still need of a spotless example. In the incarnation

of Christ the world beheld its first pure example. The pagan annals had abounded in rare minds. But they nowhere furnished a model life. Plutarch, himself coming late, when he could look back on these choicest spirits, grouped them all into one work. But he could declare no one of them worthy of the imitation of succeeding generations. Surely we may expect some better character from the chosen family. But the Jewish records do not present a pure type of humanity. Not Abraham, nor Moses, nor Aaron, nor David, nor Isaiah—patriarch, legislator, priest, king, or prophet—was worthy to be held up by the lowliest mother as an infallible guide for her child. But when Christ, the Desire of all nations, came, he said, “I am the Way.” There is no stain in him. From Bethlehem to Calvary his words were the speech of God to men. His feet never grew weary in seeking his lost sheep. So, from the day of his passion—which supplies the last color to this perfect picture—to the present day, the world has had one spotless example for living and dying. It need seek nowhere else. Its search will not be rewarded. This blameless example was needed to give unity of life to the doctrine which he proclaimed. The truth would have been incomplete without the Sinless Incarnation to respond to it.

4. THE EXPERIENCE.

The Church in its purer periods has always attached a vital importance to the religious experience. Of all the lessons of Pentecost, this is the supreme one: The human spirit must become the temple of the Holy Ghost. The entrance of the heavenly Guest marks the boundary between the old life and the new, the impure and the pure, the human and the divine. Until this experience is reached, the whole life is without the needed sunlight and the brightest sanctity. After it is reached, we observe the presence of a divine factor in the human soul, a strange force, the sure pledge of a high destiny. The converts at Pentecost had this transcendent power of a new experience, to which they could look back with all the

subtle power of a certain memory. Men may forget many things, but not the sublime experience through which they pass into Christian manhood. The clearness of religious experience entered at once into the life and culture of the Church. The conversion of Paul was always an element in his sermons. When the Christians met together they found themselves at once brothers by virtue of a common regeneration of soul. They had been made one in Christ.

The identity of experience destroyed all artificial distinctions. Perpetua, of noble blood, rejoiced to kiss, when dying, the slave Felicitas. There was a golden chain that bound them together. This oneness of Christian experience has been one of the most beautiful of all the characteristics of Christian history. In periods of greatest tribulation, when it seemed as if the burning bush would be consumed, this community of religious experience asserted itself with greatest force. The Reformers breathed the atmosphere of tender sympathy. God opened many eyes at once, and when the new light saluted these brave spirits they counseled with each other. Their places of exile became the gate of heaven. Basle, Strasburg, Geneva, Frankfort-on-the-Main, and Zurich proved to be Bethels to the banished Protestants from Great Britain.

John Knox, in Frankfort, laid foundations so broad for the later Protestantism of Scotland, that his spirit seems still to walk abroad in the land. The presence of Erasmus, Ochino, Peter Martyr, Bucer, and others in Oxford is a lesson to us that we dare not forget—that where two men are united to Christ by the same experience, and are seeking a common final reward, and partake of the same divine mysteries, they are brothers.¹ Where God sets his seal of approval on his workmen, and gives them success in the saving of souls, and their

¹ That the polity of the Reformers was no barrier to brotherhood, we hear Bishop Hall saying: "I reverence from my soul those worthy foreign Churches which have chosen and followed those forms of outward government that are the very fittest for their own condition."—*Apology Against Brownists*, fol. ed., p. 498.

lives illustrate the doctrine which they preach, they belong to the great community of believers, and are brothers, wherever found. Archdeacon Hare sees in the community of privilege and treasure the real links of Christian brotherhood: "If the body holds to the one Head, and is connected by the one faith, and is sanctified by the one baptism, it is a Church before God, and woe to us if we deny it is so!"¹

II.

UNITY NOT TO BE MISTAKEN FOR UNIFORMITY —UNIFORMITY NOT DESIRABLE.

The limited vision often confuses unity and uniformity. Each may exist without the other. There may be a spirit of love and heartiness in coöperation, and yet no oneness in form and method. On the other hand, there may be a faultless form of coöperation, and yet no unity of soul. The numerous sects of the Russo-Greek Church are a notable proof that there may be a form of unity without any approach to the fact.² Oneness in spirit and divine approval decides both the geography and the fellowship of believers. *Ubi Spiritus Sanctus, ibi Ecclesia*. No unchanging form of Church government was delivered to the apostles. Indeed, Paul teaches that this diversity is essential to the development of the Church.³ Diversity of form arose very early, and the first teachers exhibited great anxiety lest the unity of soul might be disturbed by any diversity that might arise through the multiplication of members, their citizenship in various countries, their variety of national characteristics, and their general difference of condition. Ephesus soon deviated from Jerusalem, Corinth from Antioch, Alexandria from Constantinople, and Rome from all.

There was no uniform usage in fasting throughout the

¹ See Introduction to *Sermon on the Unity of the Church*.

² See Eckhardt, *Modern Russia*. This author furnishes numerous evidences of the inward dissensions in the Russo-Greek Church.

³ Compare Hodge, *Conference Papers*, pp. 306, 307.

Christian territory. In some Churches the members fasted one day; in others, two; in some, still more; and only forty hours in others. But they all remained in the spirit of love; this very diversity of custom, as Irenæus says, commending the unity of their faith.¹ The fast of Easter was variously observed, and without causing an infraction of true fellowship. Some Churches had no bishops, as the Scots and Goths; others had one in the whole country; while others had one in each important city.² Yet these Churches remained in loving fellowship. Uniformity of rites and usages was never regarded as necessary.³ The Churches were compelled to this diversity, and they accepted it, not as an evil, but as a blessing. When taunted by pagan writers for a want of uniformity, the Christians boldly admitted it, and rejoiced in it, and proved that there was beneath it a deep and strong union never known to the pagan world. Tertullian thus gave a voice to the Church of his time: "We are ready to die for each other, and we call one another brethren because we acknowledge one and the same God and Father, and have been sanctified by the same Holy Spirit, and have been brought from the same state of ignorance to the light of the same marvelous truth."⁴ The triumph of the Church was certain when animated by such a spirit. Its spirit of love was a prophecy of universal reign.

III.

THE FAILURE OF ENFORCED UNIFORMITY.

The attempts to enforce uniformity of ceremonial and organic forms have always defeated the objects they were designed to promote. This was the chief error of Queen Elizabeth. The Act of Uniformity, passed in the first year of her reign, and re-affirmed at the Restoration, was highly disinte-

¹*Apud Euseb.*, lib. 5, cap. 24.

²Stillingfleet, *Irenicum*. Phila. ed., 1842, pp. 369, ff.

³Lord King, *Primitive Church*. New York ed., p. 283.

⁴*Apolog.*, cap. 39.

grating in its final issues, and was the most unfortunate act of her long and brilliant reign, so far as the general interests of the Church were concerned. She expressed as her motives, that "she was certainly determined to have all such diversities, varieties, and novelties among them of her clergy and her people as had nothing but contention, offense, and breach of common charity, and were also against the laws, good usages, and ordinances of her realm, reformed and repressed, and brought to the manner of uniformity through her whole realm and dominions."¹

King James I. had the same Utopian dream of the necessity of outward uniformity for inward unity, and so he declared: "I will have one doctrine and one discipline, one religion in substance and in ceremony."² By the Act of Uniformity two thousand ministers, among the most zealous in the land, were separated from their flocks, and every fifth flock was without a shepherd. The desired harvest came not from this sowing. The whole stormy career of the English people and Church from 1560 to 1662 proves the utter inability of mere legislation to promote unity of soul by ordaining outward uniformity.

The necessity of a varied Church life lies in the nature of our humanity.³ Vaughan, a wise critic on the genesis of Protestant differences in England, says: "The works of God are every-where characterized by variety, and a plan to separate men from all temptation, either to presumption or discontent, by conferring benefits upon them on the principle of a strict, monotonous equality, would have been to make human nature an exception to the general character of the system with which it is connected. . . . Our heavenly Father has given more of

¹ See Elizabeth's Letter to Archbishop Parker. Hare says on this celebrated Act of Uniformity, with keen wit: "The Queen must have known how hard it was to keep her frill, however stiffly starched, smooth and in order for a single day."

² James I.'s Declaration at the Hampton Court Conference.

³ C. G. Ulrici, *Die Regelung der kirchlichen Freiheit durch ordentliche General Synoden*.

the charm of variety to man, the noblest of his works, than to any other part of his creation known to us.”¹ There are those who think otherwise, and in their fear of variety in religious forms would exclaim, “Yes, the sky would be very beautiful if we might but comb out its tresses and put its jewels in order.”² But they forget that God has so constituted us that we must be varied, and that with the variety have come much of the religious strength and beauty that have adorned the annals of the Church. The law is: Oneness of spirit, but diversity of gifts. The unity of the Church is unity in Christ.³

As when one withdraws from the busy sounds of the street into some minster chapel, where all the noises of the street and the mart grow faint, and are forgotten in the strange but softer harmonies of the holy place, so may the believer withdraw from the contemplation of the distractions and temporary distinctions of the great body of which he forms a part, and think only of the higher melody of paternal love and common worship. The more fully we breathe the atmosphere of the first period of the Church, and the nearer we come into communion with our one Father, the more fully we see the supremacy of the reign of love. Gambold, a Moravian poet of the last century, says :

“I’m apt to think the man
That could surround the sum of things, and spy
The heart of God and secrets of his empire,
Would speak but love. With him the bright result
Would change the hue of intermediate scenes,
And make one thing of all theology.”

There is a love which controls and combines diversities, and

¹ *Religious Parties of England*, pp. 178, 179.

² Hare, *Sermon on Unity of the Church*.

³ Hooker says: “The unity of the Church of Christ consisteth in that uniformity which all the several persons thereunto belonging have, by reason of that one Lord whose servants they all profess themselves, that one Father whom they all acknowledge, that one baptism whereunto they are all initiated.”—*Eccles. Polity*, iii, 1, 3.

even converts them into great forces.¹ Bacon's excellent maxim is worthy a place on all denominational escutcheons: "*Differentiæ ritum commendant unitatem doctrinæ.*" "Above all these things," says Paul, as the zone which encircles the rich drapery of all the lesser virtues, "put on charity, which is the bond of perfectness."

IV.

THE AMERICAN EXAMPLE.

The American Church presents the most recent historical illustration of the union of evangelical Christians amid great diversity of doctrinal interpretation. The Colonial Period, extending from 1617 to 1776, was distinguished for its variety of population and religious belief. Every Protestant country in Europe had its representative on the American continent during the plastic period of our civilization. When Protestantism in Europe was suppressed for a time, as when Mary succeeded to the throne of England, and the edict of Nantes was revoked in France, the American colonies offered security from the block and the stake. Ten different currents of blood and race made up the population of the colonies. These had come with their diversities, and yet the common sufferings through which the colonists had passed, and the distance at which they now lived from the old battle-fields, taught them something of necessary charity for working out their ecclesiastical mission. Their fundamental motive was religious liberty, and not commercial advantage or the rearing of a political structure. They sought the former, but the latter was added. European writers have been correct, therefore, in terming the first stage of the American political structure a "Theocracy."² The long future was before the colonists, and they heard warning words coming down from the elder days, "See that ye fall not out by the way."

¹ Rothe says: "Every one will acknowledge without hesitation that the highest unity, the most perfect catholicity, is that which comprehends, combines, and reconciles the utmost fullness of diversities."—*Anfänge der christlichen Kirche*.

² Uhden, for example.

Calvin, the double exile, first from France and second from Geneva, was known to have said: "Keep your small differences. Let us have no discord on that account; but let us march in one solid column under the banner of the Captain of our salvation, and with undivided counsels form the legion of the cross upon the territories of darkness and death. I should not hesitate to cross ten seas, if by this means holy communion might prevail among the members of Christ."¹ Later, Wesley was heard to say: "I desire to have a league, offensive and defensive, with every soldier of Christ. We have not only one faith, one hope, one Head, but are directly engaging in one warfare."²

The emphasis placed upon the distinguishing doctrines of Christians has never been so strong in the United States as in the mother countries. Perhaps this belongs to the victories that some children inherit from valiant ancestors. All of the American denominations have depended entirely upon the operation of the voluntary principle for the support of their institutions of learning, the building of their churches, the support of their clergy, and the evangelization of the neglected and forgotten. The very conditions of their existence have brought them within clear view of each other. They have been compelled to combine their efforts for the lifting up of the fallen, caring for four millions of liberated slaves, the reaching of the unevangelized, and the ministering to the wounded and the dying in battle.

V.

NO AMERICAN SURRENDER OF DENOMINATIONAL INDIVIDUALITY.

Yet no American evangelical Church would respect itself should it make a surrender of its own individuality. Not one feels that to be loyal to the charity of believers it must forget its own history, bury its doctrinal standards, take down from

¹ See *Address to the Lutheran Churches*.

² *Letter to a Clergyman of the Church of England*.

its portrait gallery the grim and scarred faces that tell of the strifes of the heroic period, teach its young people an invertebrate theology, and avoid preaching on the doctrines that have given it its individuality and much of its endurance. Nothing is gained by the destruction of personality and denominational integrity. Each is stronger because of a just fidelity to its past. All the great bodies of Evangelical Christians in the United States are mightier because of their unbroken unity. Schleiermacher, Neander, and Vinet have taught Americans, not less than Europeans, that there is a certain intense power in the individualism of Christian life in all ages, and that much of the development of the Church has grown out of the assertion of this individuality.¹

VI.

GROWTH OF CHRISTIAN UNION IN THE MOST RECENT TIME.

The last half century has witnessed more cordial relations among Christians than had existed at any time since the Reformation. In evidence of this increasing fraternity we notice :

1. THE PREVAILING THEOLOGY.

The presence of the common skeptical foe has led the Church to inquire anew into the evidence of its supernatural origin. Thus has arisen the recent great productiveness in apologetical literature. All Protestant countries have shared in this noble work. Germany, the first to revive the attack on faith, has been the first to resist it. Neander, Tholuck, Hengstenberg, Ullmann, and men of kindred spirit, have become teachers to all Christian lands. As a distinct department of apologetics, we may name the new examination of the scriptural records. What answer do we find in the word of life? What does God say to us? These are serious inquiries in these serious times.

¹ Schleiermacher has applied the principle of individuality to ethics, and Neander has given it a singularly beautiful and forceful application to ecclesiastical history.

In exegetical theology we find the countries and the Confessions combining all their aptitudes for the important work of scriptural interpretation. A single commentary, edited in the original German by a theologian on the banks of the Rhine, and in the English version by another on the Hudson, is the joint production of twenty Continental and fifty American editors and translators. The *Speaker's Commentary* is, in another sense, the fruit of varied scholarship. It is an unmistakable sign of the times, that when the Church proposes to accomplish some great exegetical task, it should endeavor to combine writers without serious question as to their confessional differences.

2. MEASURES TOWARD UNION OF ORGANIZATION.

Denominational union has been assuming a historical importance. The Evangelical Union of the Lutheran and Reformed Churches in Germany in 1817 was the initial step in Protestant Germany. The reunion of the Old and New School Presbyterian Churches in the United States was a great advance. The various members of the leading ecclesiastical families have been consulting—such as the Pan-Anglican Convention in Lambeth, and the Pan-Presbyterian Convention in Edinburgh. The two chief Methodist Churches in the United States—the Methodist Episcopal Church and the Methodist Episcopal Church, South—have held anticipative consultations; and the former Church has even inaugurated arrangements for a meeting of all the Methodist Churches of every country. Other great religious bodies are going over, in brotherly love, the points dear and in common to all. This tendency toward organic union is in the ecclesiastical atmosphere about us.

3. DANGER OF PREMATURE UNION.

There is danger, however, that organic union may be carried too far, and prematurely adopted. Astronomy teaches that a premature approach of heavenly bodies cuts off all opportunity of future harmony. The repulsion then becomes so great that

there seldom takes place a sympathy of future orbits. Real union is not a manufacture. It is a growth, and must be inspired by divine law. Time must do its work before the folds of the charitable mantle can fall as gently as we would desire over the seams and sharpnesses of the past. Love cannot be controlled by the vote of an assembly or the stroke of a bell. The premature union of religious bodies brings more evils in its train than if there had been no approach at all.

4. THE LESSON OF THE EVANGELICAL ALLIANCE.

The Evangelical Alliance is an outgrowth of the irenical spirit of the century. It is impossible to tell just when and where it originated. Like the Reformation, it was a common impulse of widely-distributed Christian peoples. There is an American thread in this fabric. In 1839 there was formed in New York, chiefly through the labors of Rev. Dr. Schmucker, a society for the purpose of promoting Christian unity. A pamphlet, entitled "Fraternal Appeal to the American Churches," indicated the basis of union, and was widely distributed. This society became extinct, but in May, 1846, about fifty American divines and laymen met in New York, formed the first nucleus of the American Branch of the Evangelical Alliance, and appointed delegates to the approaching London General Conference. Then we notice a German thread. In 1842 Rev. Dr. Kniewel, archdeacon of Danzig, traveled through England, France, Belgium, Switzerland, and Germany for the purpose of promoting friendly relations between Christians of both Established and Dissenting Churches. In 1844 he published an account of his journey, and thus prepared many minds for co-operation with the Evangelical Alliance. There is also a French thread. In 1845 the Protestant Church of Lyons called a meeting in favor of united Christianity. A committee was formed in Lyons, Paris, Nismes, and other places where French is spoken, such as Brussels, Geneva, Lausanne. These constituted the French branch of the Evangelical Alliance, and

entered into communication with the English body. But the English thread is the most important. A number of meetings in favor of Christian unity were held throughout the kingdom, and finally culminated in the London General Conference. There was no disposition on the part of any Church connected with the Alliance, in any of these countries, to escape from Confessional accountability and individuality. It was not, as one of our modern pagan poets has sung—

The desire of the moth for the star,
Of the night for the morrow ;
The devotion to something afar
From the sphere of our sorrow.

But it was taught that there was yet some Christian ground not yet fully occupied ; that there was a place for a wider co-operation of believers ; and that the united action of evangelical Christians could accomplish a work which as individuals could not be done. This thought has had its fulfillment, and yet much greater work remains to be done.

5. SUNDAY-SCHOOL INSTRUCTION.

In 1872 an effort was made in the United States for a uniform system of Sunday-school instruction. It was believed that many advantages could be gained by the leading denominations deciding on one common lesson system ; that it would, for example, bring all teachers and friends of the Sunday-school into more cordial relations, that better facilities could be afforded for the training of teachers for their work, and that a systematic study of the Bible would be secured in all schools. A special committee, consisting of Rev. Drs. J. H. Vincent and Edward Eggleston, and B. F. Jacobs, Esq., who were appointed to make arrangements for the Fifth Annual Sunday-school Convention, to be held in Indianapolis in 1872, met in New York in 1871, and decided upon a uniform lesson system, and presented it to the Convention, when it was

adopted. A committee of six ministers and six laymen, from different parts of the United States and Canada, and representing different denominations, were appointed to arrange a series of Bible Lessons for a term of seven years, and covering the study of the whole Bible. It was recommended that the Sunday-schools of the whole country adopt this lesson system.¹ Dr. Vincent entered into correspondence with British Sunday-school workers, such as Mr. F. J. Hartley and Rev. James Inglis, who approved of the plan. The trial of the first seven years' Lesson System has proved an eminent success. A committee, from all the leading American Churches, arranged a second systematic course of instruction. This is now prosecuted all over the country, and in nearly all the foreign mission fields of the American Church. Out of this fraternal relation in Sunday-school instruction has grown the Chautauqua Convention, which is held every year in August, and is attended by persons interested in Sunday-school work from all parts of the United States and the Dominion of Canada. The plan for normal class study is carefully prepared, and is carried out by teachers and lecturers without regard to confessional differences. The Chautauqua Literary and Scientific Circle utilizes existing Sunday-school organizations in promoting true mental culture. It prescribes a course of study, with a view to future examination, and is valuable in the impulse it gives to many minds, who have not had the opportunity of extensive academic study, for study at home according to a prescribed system of study. The American poet, Wm. C. Bryant, shortly before his death, gave it his cordial indorsement in these words: "It will give the members a common pursuit, which always begets a feeling of brotherhood. They will have a common topic of conversation and discussions, and the consequence will be that many

¹ This committee consisted of the following: J. H. Vincent, Chairman; W. Randolph, Secretary; John Hall, Richard Newton, A. L. Chapin, George H. Stuart, B. F. Jacobs, P. G. Gillett, A. G. Tyng, H. P. Haven, J. Munro Gibson, A. Macallum. See Gilbert, *The Lesson System: The Story of Its Origin and Inauguration*, p. 58.

who, if they stood alone, might soon grow weary of the studies assigned to them, will be incited to perseverance by the interest which they see others take in them." Within the last two decades there has been a great increase in Sunday-school literature in all lands.

6. BIBLE REVISION.

One evidence of the fraternal relations of the various Anglo-Saxon religious bodies may be seen in the measures adopted in Great Britain and the United States for a careful revision of the authorized English version of the Scriptures, namely, King James' version of 1611 A.D. In 1870 the Convocation of Canterbury appointed a committee of eminent biblical scholars of the Church of England, with power to revise for public use the Authorized Version, and to associate with them representative biblical scholars of other Christian denominations. The American Committee was organized in 1871, by invitation and with the approval of the British revisers, and began work in 1872. The British and American committees are virtually one organization, with the same principles and objects, and in constant correspondence with each other. The two committees embrace seventy-nine active members—fifty-two in England and twenty-seven in America—who represent every leading evangelical Confession in Anglo-Saxon Christendom.¹

7. YOUNG MEN'S CHRISTIAN ASSOCIATIONS.

These were organized in London in 1844 for the special purpose of shielding young men from the temptations surrounding them. In 1851 an association was formed in Montreal, and shortly afterward another in New York. Since then they have multiplied in all parts of the Christian world, and are maintained by the various evangelical denominations. The following list of conferences gives proof of their rapid and healthful increase:—

¹*Anglo-American Bible Revision.* Essays by members of the American Revision Committee. New York, 1879.

LIST OF CONFERENCES OF YOUNG MEN'S CHRISTIAN ASSOCIATIONS OF ALL LANDS.

COUNTRIES REPRESENTED, AND NUMBER OF DELEGATES AND MEMBERS FROM EACH.

[illegible]

As an index of the financial and general strength of this important agency of united American Christians we give a table illustrative of the constant growth of the Young Men's Christian Associations in the United States:—

STATISTICS OF THE YEARS 1873-79.

	1873-4.	1874-5.	1875-6.	1876-7.	1877-8.	1878-9.
Whole number of Associations.	840	950	965	980	999	1,000
Number of Associations reporting.	398	562	816	775	854	839
Average number of members of whole number of Assoc'ns.	115	123	110	100	100	100
Total number of members.	96,600	106,850	106,150	98,000	99,000	100,000
Average annual expenses of whole number of Assoc'ns.	\$450	\$420	\$380	\$380	\$380	\$390
Total annual expenses of whole number of Associations.	\$378,000	\$399,000	\$357,700	\$323,400	\$376,200	\$390,000
Number of General Secretaries.	78	87	92	112	114	141
Number of buildings.	47	56	60	48	56	60
Value of buildings.	\$1,963,000	\$2,434,900	\$2,390,600	\$1,862,811	\$1,924,770	\$2,451,000
Building Funds.	56	46	56	47	42	37
Amount of Funds.	\$529,662	\$408,756	\$399,123	\$368,007	\$234,182	\$280,190
Bible Classes.	92	86	122	178	198	201

VII.

NECESSITY OF UNION IN OPPOSING ERROR.

1. HEATHENISM.

The world has not yet been conquered for Christ. Heathenism is still broad and proud. Missionary efforts need to be multiplied, and the generosity of the Church at home is to be taxed to its utmost. Without doubt, the labors of the missionaries in foreign lands have accomplished far more because of their denominational quality than if they had been supported by undenominational contributions. But the spirit of unity of purpose at home in organizing missionary work, and a sense of fraternity when in contact with the heathen, are absolutely necessary for the highest missionary success. Distance from the battle-fields of home makes the missionary, when face to face with gross idolatry, forget largely the distinctions and prejudices of his native land. Livingstone has well said: "All classes of Christians find that sectarian rancor soon dies out when they are working together among and for the real heathen." Here, too,

denominational individuality must be preserved. But the heathen must be made to see that beneath all the apparent divisions among Christians there is a pure love and fellowship prevailing among all workers in their midst. Love is the one thing against which there is no argument. It is the final appeal. The spirit of the Evangelical Alliance has even extended to the far-off heathen fields. For example, in Japan an Evangelical Alliance has been formed, and the first session was held in Tokio in July, 1878. It was conducted by native and foreign Christians, and had an important bearing in the work of all the denominations represented in that kingdom.'

2. ROMANISM.

Romanism, while it has made its own boast of unity, has always charged Protestantism with divisions. The reverse is really the fact. The origin of Jansenism in Holland, and Old Catholicism in Germany and Switzerland, are indices of the completeness of the inner spirit of disruption. The Reformation was an effort in the direction of the unity of believers. Dorner uses the following words as a declaration of his purpose in writing his history of Protestant theology: "Under the guidance of the spirit of evangelical Christianity, in spite of the variety of nationalities, as well as the manifold conformations of evangelical Protestant Christianity among those peoples who have appropriated the blessings of the Reformation of the sixteenth century, in spite of the divisions in language, usages, and habits, as well as in destiny, evangelical Protestant Christendom is a unity. When all Protestants can approach each other in a spirit of love, each preserving his own individuality, yet co-operating for the progress of the Gospel, there will be few to believe any longer in Bossuet's dream of the divisions of Protestantism. As a practical illustration of the

¹ Among the topics discussed were, The Teachings of Christianity and Its Enemies; Basis of Christian Unity; Christianity and Literature; Christianity and Liberty; and, Sunday-schools.

power of inter-denominational union to counteract Roman Catholic error, we may refer to that noble and successful institution, the Gustavus Adolphus Society, in Germany, and the American and Foreign Christian Union, in the United States.

3. SKEPTICISM.

The vigor of the present attack of so-called Liberal theology on the one hand, and Materialism on the other, should not create discouragement among believers. There must be some wise end in the divine permission of the hostile forces through all these ages, from Celsus and Porphyry down to the present generation of the Idolaters of Force. Perhaps the visitation has made the Church look more attentively upon the grounds of its faith, and to have care that no rust gather on its sword and shield. The new foe is only the old one. The infidelity of to-day has simply the rouge of this newest century upon its wrinkled face. This same changing, yet slowly-dying, infidelity would take away our comfort in the present life and our hope for the future. We cannot surrender that which makes both lives dear to us. The most pitiable feature of skepticism is its wretched poverty. It has nothing but words. It furnishes no substitute for the thefts it would commit. Goethe's tender word, though not so designed, describes well the protest which the child of Faith must make against the deprivations of doubt:

“Yet must thou leave me
My earth still standing,
And this my dwelling, which thou didst not build;
And my bright hearth,
Whose ruddy glow
Thou enviest me.”¹

¹ Prometheus: Muss mir meine Erde
Doch lassen stehen,
Und meine Huette, die du nicht gebaut;
Und meinen Herd.
Um dessen gut
Du mich beneidest.

In the presence of this vandal skepticism the Church has a new reminder of the necessity of a loving union of all believers in our Lord Jesus Christ. There must be one front against this eager foe. The Church can afford to waste no vital force in a controversy on matters of small moment.

The union of believers will be misjudged by our foes. Even this Evangelical Alliance is termed narrow. The union which it teaches, and of which it is itself an illustration, causes great offense to those who doubt the fundamental principles of the Christian faith. The very platform of the Alliance is opposed by the skeptic as being too narrow. Here is a specimen of how our adversaries attack it: "These fundamentals are dishonoring to God, reproachful of our nation, contrary to reason, exaggerations of Scripture, fatal to any permanent hold of Christ, and, next to the baser passions and appetites, the chief source of skepticism and superstition."¹ This is only one of the outbursts of wrath which took place in New York after the close of the session of the Alliance in 1873. There was an organized attack proposed by our so-called Free Religionists. Essays were read by Messrs. Frothingham, Youmans, Weiss, Ellenger, Abbot, and others. A choice letter from Charles Bradlaugh, of England, was welcomed and read. The very topics discussed by the Alliance were held up as a ground of reproach. One speaker, Rev. Mr. Weiss, author of the "Life of Theodore Parker," even went so far as to compare these addresses of those representatives of theological thought to Falstaff's tavern bill:

"As regard for authority is supreme in the Evangelical Churches, I considered from what quarter the model and tradition of these subjects must have been derived; and I found it at length in the tavern-bill which Prince Henry discovered in Falstaff's pocket:

Item—A Capon.....	2s. 6d.	Item—Anchovies and	
Item—Sauce.....	0 4d.	Item—Sack after Supper...	2s. 6d.
Item—Sack, two gallons...	5s. 8d.	Item—Bread.....	0 ½d.

¹ Bellows' Sermon on the Evangelical Alliance. See New York Tribune, Oct. 15, 1873.

"Monstrous, indeed! Only one half-penny worth of Social Evil to that intolerable deal of theological brew!"¹

When such a session as that of the Evangelical Alliance in New York, in 1873, can awaken such protests on the part of our skeptical adversaries, we must accept the protest as a gratifying index of the power of Christian union. The oneness of all believers must awaken the fears of all enemies of evangelical truth, whether in the Old or the New World. It is one of the new prophecies of final success: *Christi, vicisti!*

4. UNITY OF SOCIETY.

The world is, at best, divided. Christ directed the attention of his disciples to the power of his atonement as the world's great unifying agency: "And I, if I be lifted up, will draw all men unto me." There is no hope of the union of these jarring millions of our fellow-beings under one form of government, or social system, or ecclesiastical organization. But we can well hope for union under the common banner of the Prince of peace. All sin is disintegrating and dispersing. It alienates wherever it is found. But the Gospel of Christ, if taught as he taught, and lived as he lived, must remove the causes of dissent and controversy, and bring long-lost brothers into a new acquaintanceship and everlasting union.² The world has its unity, but that of the Church of Christ is very far removed from it. It is, indeed, the connecting link of all society. All the poor substitutes for our evangelical religion, and all such educational social schemes as that of Rousseau and Basedow, are only the priest and the Levite going on the other side of the road from our wounded humanity. Christianity, in the keenness of its vision and breadth of its sympathy, is that poor Samaritan who approaches the sufferer, and secures his comfort, safety, and life.

¹ See New York Tribune of Oct. 16 and 17, 1873, for this and other proceedings of the "Free Religion Alliance."

² Hodge, *Church Polity*, p. 21.

VIII.

THE ADVANCE YET TO BE MADE.

If the union of believers is such an important factor as we declare it to be, it is clear that its whole mission has by no means been fulfilled.

1. Greater attention must be given to the preaching of fundamental Christian doctrines. The depravity of the human heart, thorough repentance because of sin, faith in Christ, regeneration of the heart, the sanctification of the believer, the personal and individual resurrection of this human body, the recognition of friends, the salvation of believers, and the enduring punishment of the finally impenitent—these are the truths which the first preachers boldly declared, and which gained the Church its first power. There is no substitute for them. They are needed now as fully as when Paul made his first missionary tour through Asia Minor, or missionaries from Italy first landed on the shores of Britain, and came face to face with Jute, Angle, Saxon, and Frisian.

2. There should be a more frequent interchange of denominational sentiment. While each great religious body has its own history, its own traditions, its dearest and most revered names, there need be no surrender of them ; but many difficulties may be removed by a more frequent and cordial inter-Confessional sentiment. In the best periods there has always been a beautiful reciprocity of love and visitation. The Fathers of the early Church were constantly visiting the separated sections, and bringing all parts into spiritual homogeneousness ! The Churches of Asia Minor and those of Gaul encouraged each other, for example, in the sore persecutions through which they had to pass. Justin Martyr chose the itinerant life for his ministerial career, and we find him in Ephesus, Egypt, Lower Italy, and Rome, binding all parts of the Church together by the force of his personal presence. The personal interviews between the Reformers, their fraternal meetings and discussions, were of

marked effect¹ in promoting harmony of action and the removal of many theological differences. The journeys of Erasmus, fond as he was of Greek study here in the silent cloisters of the venerable cathedral in this city, had much to do with developing a homogeneous theology and a unity of action in Switzerland and Holland. There was just a little stir and emphatic discussion between Luther and Zwingli at Marburg; but the clearer vision has long since decided that their disputation accomplished great good, saved much heart-burning, and made more feasible a later harmony of the Protestant view of the Lord's Supper. No, denominational sympathy without the compromise of denominational individuality has not yet run its race.² There is much room for sympathy still! For the better reaching of the masses, the educating of the young, the uplifting of the poor, the learning of the best methods from each other, we need, for the great advances required by the future, this broader and more frequent denominational communion.

3. There should be a more intense treasuring of possessions common to us all. In the religious life all good currents cross each other. Few Churches are the sole authors of their own most precious treasures. Even Christianity has its Jewish origin. "What has Jerusalem to do with Athens?" asks Tertullian; and in reply one might say, "Very much, for Paul every-where gives evidence of his Greek culture, and it became one of his forces in the development of the doctrinal system of the early Church."³ The whole Church of Christ has a common treasure in the theology of the first five centuries. The writings of all the Reformers can stand in brotherly union

¹ Piper, (see *Evangelischer Kalender*, Jahrgang, pp. 29-60,) furnishes an interesting sketch, with many new details of the travels of the Church Fathers.

² Hodge says, on Paul's doctrine of the necessary union of believers, "that God means by creating us so diversely: 1. That each should be content; 2. All should sympathize with each other; 3. All should coöperate."—*Conference Papers*, pp. 306, 307.

³ Compare the scriptural use of πνεῦμα ἁγίον and the *Sacer Spiritus* of Seneca, together with many important parallels between the classical writers and Paul, cited by Lightfoot, *St. Paul's Epistle to the Philippians*, pp. 268-331.

on the shelves of any library. Who can appropriate Luther, or Zwingli, or Calvin, or Melancthon, or Erasmus, or Spener, or Zinzendorf, or Wesley? To whom belong the martyrs? Who dare shut them up in his own jewel-case? Shall Italy and Switzerland lay sole claim to their heroic Waldenses—

“Slaughtered saints, whose bones
Lie scattered on the Alpine mountains cold?”

The theology of two centuries ago in England belongs to universal Christendom. The hymns we sing have been struck first from very varied harp-strings. The Protestant does not become undevout if he sing the songs of the mediæval Bernard of Clairvaux, or of the Faber of our own times. The psalmody of our Protestant Churches has come from all quarters of the compass and from all Christian ages. The partition of the choice hymns of the Church among those who claim their authorship would be no more possible than the parceling off of the sunlight. The great Confessions, which are the purest voices of the Churches, have gone far beyond their original limits. Why should there not be a treasuring of each other's possessions, a just love for the great achievements of all the servants of Christ by all the servants of Christ? The brave heart and the strong hand do service for all believers of every name. He who has fought well for the good cause of the Gospel belongs to the heroic group of the one whole Church of Christ.

IX.

UNITY IN THE CHURCH MILITANT A PREPARATION FOR THE HIGHER UNITY OF THE CHURCH TRI- UMPHANT.

He who cultivates the fraternal spirit amid the strifes and convulsions of the present life is better prepared thereby for the peace and rest of heaven. The great champions of the truth, as they have drawn near the end of their work, have always counseled forbearance and gentleness. The Church here

is the only type we have of the Church hereafter. If rent here, it will convey a very faint idea of the common joys that await the believer in the heavenly city, adorned

“ With pyramids and towers
From diamond quarries hewn, and rocks of gold.”

As we look about us to-day we no longer see faces familiar and dear to the members of this Alliance. They have taken their permanent place in the Church of the first-born. Some, with the charms of their earnest words yet lingering in our ears, soon went home to their crowns and palms. At the recent sessions of the Alliance there were present as participants many who are now beyond the strife of this life. At the New York session there were Pronier and Carrasco, whose resurrection will be none the less triumphant and glorious because it shall be from the calm depths of the sea—for the sea shall give up its dead. Then there was Cook, who twice escaped shipwreck, but whose shattered frame yielded to the shock amid the endearments of home as he looked out upon the welcome sunlight of his own fair France. These, with many others, have ascended to that long communion of saints.

“ One family we dwell in him,
One Church above, beneath,
Though now divided by the stream,
The narrow stream of death.
One army of the living God,
To his command we bow;
Part of his host have crossed the flood,
And part are crossing now.”

The underlying ground for this endeavor after a higher unity is Christ's reconciliation of all “unto God in one body.” He is the bond of union, and through him and in him only can we hope for the completeness of heaven.¹ We are

¹ Grotius: “The two different parts (Jews and Gentiles) are so united that they are first and chiefly united with the connecting bond. Jews and Gentiles were made friends with each other through their friendship with God.” See *Defense of Catholic Faith, concerning Satisfaction of Christ*. Chap. vii, 7, sec. vi.

hastening to the better day. In due time we shall cast aside this coarse working garb, and, as Luther was wont to say, "We shall put on our Easter robes." Then there will be one home and one song. The divisions and confusions of this mortal life will be forgotten in the lasting union of heaven. We shall no longer remember the Babel of earth, when our ears catch the first harmonious syllables of the one language of the everlasting Pentecost.

733¹⁴ July 28

CHRISTIAN UNION

NECESSARY FOR

Religious Progress and Defense.

BY JOHN F. HURST, D.D.,

PRESIDENT OF THE DREW THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY.

ADDRESS BEFORE THE EVANGELICAL ALLIANCE, IN BASLE, SWITZERLAND,
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